

The Raging Battle Over "Repentance"

By David J. Stewart

There is a raging battle today in theological circles over the meaning of *REPENTANCE*. Jesus exclaimed in Mark 1:15, "...*repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" The Greek word for "repent" here is *METANOEO*, which means, "to change one's mind." Biblical repentance is a change of one's mind. Notice that believing the Gospel is the object of repentance; and not ceasing from sinful bad habits, forsaking the world or anything else.



The Gospel is the object of true repentance; not ridding one's life of sin, which is what heretics like Ray Comfort and John MacArthur teach. Mark 1:15 plainly teaches that the Gospel is the object of repentance. Men repent and believe the Gospel. That is salvation. Repentance and believing are not two separate steps to salvation; but rather, repentance is a change of mind that prompts a man to believe the Gospel. They are two parts of one step. The man who has repented has believed, and the man who believes has repented. This is why the Gospel of John mentions the word "believe" and "believed" 85-times, but the word "repent" is never mentioned, not even once.

There is NO controversy if you believe the Bible. The FACT is that the Bible **never** uses the phrases "repent of your sins" or "turn from your sins" in regards to salvation. Salvation is a free gift of God—not of works—and relies totally upon God's mercy through the LITERAL blood sacrifice of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 9:12); not forsaking one's sinful lifestyle (Titus 3:5, Ephesians 2:8,9). "Repent" in regards to salvation does not mean "stop living in sin." It means to "change one's mind." Carefully notice in Mark 1:15 what Jesus said... "*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" Notice that Jesus DIDN'T say "repent ye, and forsake your sins." No, rather, Jesus said, "**repent ye, and believe the gospel.**"

Pastor Harry Ironside (1876-1951) Has it Correct

Please read the following excellent explanation of the Gospel by former *Moody Memorial Church* pastor, Harry A. Ironside (1876-1951)...

"The Gospel is not a call to repentance, or to amendment of our ways, to make restitution for past sins, or to promise to do better in the future. These things are proper in their place, but they do not constitute the Gospel; for the Gospel is not good advice to be obeyed, it is good news to be believed. Do not make the mistake then of thinking that the Gospel is a call to duty or a call to reformation, a call to better your condition, to behave yourself in a more perfect way than you have been doing in the past ...



Nor is the Gospel a demand that you give up the world, that you give up your sins, that you break off bad habits, and try to cultivate good ones. You may do all these things, and yet never believe the Gospel and consequently never be saved at all."

SOURCE: Dr. Harry A. Ironside, from the sermon: *What Is The Gospel?*

Clearly, Ironside correctly taught a Free Grace view of the Gospel. Amen! Don't mess with the Gospel. Just believe it!

Romans 3:19 Clarifies the Meaning of "Repentance"

Romans 3:19, "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." The word "guilty" in the Greek is "hupodikos" and means "under judgment, one who lost his suit; of liable to punishment from God" (SOURCE: *Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*). Hence, a person must realize their GUILT to be saved, i.e., that the condemnation of God is upon them because of their own sins. A person must realize that they are a guilty sinner who justly deserves to be punished in Hellfire. A person does NOT need to feel regret, sorrow, or a desire to do better to be saved. These are all emotions. Repentance is a "change of mind," not a change of emotions.

H.A. Ironside correctly recognized repentance as the confession that "one is utterly without merit" and that if one is "ever saved at all it can only be through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ." Salvation is without works of self-righteousness. Romans 4:5 plainly teaches that a man's faith is COUNTED for righteousness, i.e., the righteousness of Jesus Christ is imputed to one's heavenly record by faith.

"Repentance is the recognition of my sinnership — the owning before God that I am as vile as He has declared me to be in His holy Word."

SOURCE: *Except Ye Repent*, by Dr. Harry Ironside, chapter 3

Realizing one's GUILT is vastly different from a FEELING of sorrow or remorse over one's sins. To FEEL sorry for one's sins is an act of self-EMOTION; whereas, GUILT is a matter of self-AWARENESS. Many prison convicts are sorry (emotionally) for their crimes, but only because they got caught. They have no genuine guilt or awareness of the sins they've committed against God. Likewise, a person may walk down to a church altar and cry with emotion over their failures in life; YET, have NO awareness that they are under God's condemnation and awaiting judgment for their sins.

A feeling of emotion, i.e., sorrow over one's sins is not Biblical repentance. Biblical repentance is when a lost sinner becomes AWARE that they are under the condemnation of GOD'S LAW for their own sins, and TURNS in faith to the Lord Jesus Christ to be forgiven... "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ..." Repentance and faith happen simultaneously, they are not two separate events. This fact is clearly evidenced by the

Gospel of John, in which the words "repent" and "repentance" are not even mentioned once.

Yet, we find the words "faith" and "believe" 98 times in the Book of John. Clearly, to believe upon Jesus is to have also repented. When a person repents, i.e., *changes one's mind*, about sin and the Savior, trusting upon the Lord for forgiveness, it is at that very moment of faith that the Holy Spirit comes to indwell that person forever.

The reason why salvation is found alone in Christ, and why we are to believe ONLY upon Him, is because Jesus paid the price for our sins with His precious blood (1st Peter 1:18,19). Muhammad never did this. Confucius never did this. Buddha never did this. In fact, if you'll look in those graves, you'll find the bodily remains of each of those men; but Jesus' tomb is EMPTY, because He is alive forevermore. The stone wasn't rolled away for Jesus to escape the tomb; the stone was rolled away so the world could see that Christ had arisen! What a Savior!!!

Lordship Salvation is of the Devil

LORDSHIP SALVATION is the false teaching that a sinner **MUST** be willing to stop living a sinful lifestyle to be saved. Nothing could be further from the truth. No such false doctrine is taught in the Word of God. Proponents of this heresy pervert the Biblical meaning of the Word "repent." Again, Jesus exclaimed in Mark 1:15, "...*repent ye, and believe the gospel.*" The Greek word for "repent" here is *METANOEO*, which means, "to change one's mind." This is irrefutable evidence against the heresy of *Lordship Salvation*, which perverts the meaning of *repentance* to mean "forsaking one's sinful lifestyle." Biblical repentance is the recognition of my sinnership — the owning before God that I am as vile as He has declared me to be in His holy Word. It's not what you're doing that gets you to Heaven, it's where you're looking. Look to Jesus!

Lordship Salvation is a curse upon America today, taught by such heretics as John MacArthur, Ray Comfort, and literally thousands of internet websites. Acts 20:21 speaks of "*repentance TOWARD GOD.*" The Bible does NOT teach repentance FROM sin to be saved; but rather, of repentance TOWARDS GOD because of our sins. One who acknowledges his guilt of sin and believes on Jesus Christ to be pardoned has repented.

David Cloud's Malicious Attack Against America's Mightiest Soulwinners

Www.wayoflife.org author, David Cloud, ruthlessly attacks Pastor Jack Hyles and Dr. Curtis Hutson on the issue of repentance. I like David Cloud, but he's wrong. Dr. Hyles was unquestionably the greatest preacher of the 20th century and a mighty soulwinner. Dr. Hutson was as genuine and doctrinally sound a man of God as was *Sword of the Lord* founder, Dr. John R. Rice. Mr. Cloud is barking up an empty tree by criticizing these two great men of God.

Here is an excerpt below from David W. Cloud's own writings against Curtis Hutson. Mr. Cloud begins here by attempting to redefine the Greek word "metanoia," i.e., **to change the mind**. Mr. Cloud says that it is "error" to translate it as "merely" a change of mind. Any honest Greek student would not approach God's Word by first denying it's correct definition, by a pre-conceived interpretation of the word in it's context. This is blatant deception and is mishandling the Scriptures. If you follow his reasoning through, he and

Ray Comfort are like two peas in a pod. The only difference is that David Cloud is attempting to teach reformation "BEFORE" salvation, thus thrusting human effort into the free gift of God! Ray Comfort teaches this same thing.

David Cloud states...

THE ERROR OF DEFINING REPENTANCE MERELY AS A CHANGE OF MIND (Cloud)

"Another man who has widely influenced the doctrine of repentance held by independent Baptists is the late Curtis Hutson, former editor of the Sword of the Lord. His 1986 booklet "Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?" has been distributed widely. Hutson boldly denied that repentance means to turn from sin (p. 4). He denied that repentance is sorrow for sin (p. 8). He even denied that repentance means "a change of mind that leads to a change of action" (p. 16). He claimed that repentance simply is "to change one's mind" and that it did not necessarily result in a change of life. In an attempt to build his doctrine of repentance, Curtis Hutson quoted Scripture that appears to support his position but he ignored the Scriptures that plainly denounce his position. He misquoted the writings of men like his predecessor John R. Rice. He also mixed in a heavy dose of human reasoning."

SOURCE: <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/repentancelordship.htm>

David Cloud is wrong to sow discord amongst brethren (Proverb 6:16-19). Dr. Hutson and Dr. Rice are in complete agreement on the matter of repentance! You simply cannot take a word and make it mean something that the context never intends, especially about "repentance" in regard to Salvation. Cloud's approach is all wrong. Dr. Hutson is not denying anything—Mr. Cloud is upset because Dr. Hutson's teachings refute his private interpretation of what "repentance" means. The real issue is what is one changing his mind *about*. It is impossible to make "METANOEO" mean "turn from sins," as David Cloud seems to claim, in any given instance where word is used. This is where Mr. Cloud gets himself into trouble.

David Cloud states...

"He [Dr. Curtis Hutson] even denied that repentance means "a change of mind that leads to a change of action"

SOURCE: <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/repentancelordship.htm>

Instead of David Cloud here trying to prove his own argument he chooses a clever tactic of self-supremacy; that is, his view is the confirmed stance of all good men; to "even" consider any other explanation is intolerable. Scripture does not support this exclusive view of repentance at all. Repentance always leads to "SALVATION" first in the Scriptures; not a change of action as Mr. Cloud claims. This is the consistent Bible pattern—The Holy Spirit changes your mind, you get saved, *then the life and actions change!* (1st Peter 2:2; 2nd Corinthians 5:17). In Romans 12:1, Paul begged the believers at Rome to surrender their lives to God. They were saved, but they hadn't presented their bodies to God "a living sacrifice" yet. Look at the carnal church at Corinth! They were suing each other (1st Corinthians 6:6), eating meats offered to idols (1st Corinthians 8:12), allowing fornication within the church (1st Corinthians 5:1), showing

up drunk at the Lord's Supper (1st Corinthians 11:21), et cetera. The idea of "turning from sins" prior to salvation is not anywhere taught except in David Cloud's false teachings and is nigh unto the heresy of works salvation, if not altogether so.

David Cloud Misinterprets Acts 20:21

David Cloud further states...

If repentance and faith are the same, why does the Bible make such a plain distinction between them? *"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 20:21). In reality, repentance and faith are two different actions though they are intimately connected and cannot necessarily be separated in time. Repentance is to acknowledge one's sin and rebellion against God and to change one's mind about sinning against God. Faith is to trust the finished work of Christ for forgiveness. Repentance and faith are the two aspects of man's response to God's offer of salvation.*

SOURCE: <http://www.wayoflife.org/fbns/repentancelordship.htm>

David Cloud has wrongfully accused Brother Hutson of preaching "Easy Prayerism." The term "Easy Prayerism" is a dangerous term, because we read in Luke 18:13... *"And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner."* The publican cried out to God in a simple, easy, sinner's PRAYER. It is extremely dangerous to criticize soulwinners who are following the Bible, who are preaching the simple Gospel. The truth is that a simple prayer is enough to save a person IF that person has repented, i.e., *changed his or her mind* concerning sin and the Savior.

Mr. Cloud has even written a book titled *Repentance is More Than a Sinner's Prayer*. Again, this is extremely dangerous thinking, because Romans 10:13 simply states... *"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."* I realize that there are false conversions today; but it is not because of leading people in a sinner's prayer. The thief on the cross admitted he was a sinner (Luke 23:41), and then turned to Jesus for salvation (Luke 23:42). Jesus didn't ask the thief if he intended to stop stealing after he was saved. Jesus didn't ask the man, as David Cloud teaches, if he was ready for the changes that were coming. How ridiculous! The thief on the cross simply realized his guilt, and turned in faith to the Savior in for salvation.

Who is David Cloud to judge a person's heart? Lot in the Old Testament lived a carnal life; BUT, 2nd Peter 2:7 in the New Testament calls Lot a "just man." The Bible is filled with carnal believers who shamed the Lord by committing sins: Noah, Moses, Rahab, Lot, Abraham, David, Solomon, Peter, Ananias and Sapphira, the adulterous Christian man at Corinth (1st Corinthians 5:1-5), the drunkard Christians at the Lord's Supper (1st Corinthians 11:21), et cetera. Concerning the man living in fornication, the Apostle Paul said in 1st Corinthians 5:5... *"To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus."* In other words, the man may choose to live the remainder of his Christian life in unrepentant sin, and destroy his own life, but the Lord will settle the matter when He returns at the Rapture.

Whether people like David Cloud want to admit it or not, some believers do choose to continue living in unrepentant sin. Sometimes believers commit hideous sins, such as when David conspired to murder Bathsheba's husband, and he did. Hebrews 12:8 tells us that God WILL CHASTISE his own. No genuine Christian can enjoy living in sin, because the Holy Spirit living within will convict them. We have a group of pious, arrogant, sanctimonious, pompous, hypocritical believers today who seem to have forgotten just how rotten and dirty they are as sinners themselves. The big difference between a Christian who sins, and the world, is in one's attitude towards their own sin. The wicked world attempts to justify their sins; but the believer is convicted by the Holy Spirit, and has a desire to forsake his sins, even though he may not.

The following Greek rule proves that David Cloud misinterprets Acts 20:21...

Granville Sharp's Rule of Greek Exegesis

Sadly, Cloud falls short of 2nd Timothy 2:15. He simply does not study! Acts 20:21 does not teach two separate actions at all! Repentance and faith are shown as the **same thing** in this verse. Here is why;

"Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*".

Any time two singular Greek nouns appear in a sentence and are connected by the conjunction "and" (kai Greek) and the definite article "ho" precedes the first noun, but not the second, they both mean the same person! This means that the appositive, our Lord Jesus Christ, is referring to "God" in the first clause! Rendering this into the sentence it is then to be read as follows:

Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, *repentance toward God, ("EVEN") or ("that is") faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ*".

This is what Paul was preaching! ***Repentance toward God*** using the Granville Sharp's rule of Greek exegesis, is synonymous (means the same) as ***faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ***.

Faith and repentance are the same thing according to Greek grammatical rendering of this verse. However, David Cloud does not follow good biblical interpretation, and ends up with a false interpretation to support his false claims. If we need to be right about anything in the Bible, it is SALVATION. If we are wrong here we will be wrong everywhere else, not to mention our destination if we believe a false Gospel.

The bottom line to Cloud's teaching on repentance is that you cannot come to Christ for salvation unless you first intend not to walk in sin after you receive Him. This is "qualification by works" as a prerequisite for receiving Christ as Savior. This is utter heresy.

More Heretics on Repentance!

The internet is infested with false prophets and wannabe Bible-scholars who are butchering the Word of God. Here's one example of the type of heresy which is circulating around the world on the internet...

Today, in the ranks of our Independent Baptist churches, we are overcome by the super salesmen "soulwinners" who pull professions out of lost souls with a promise that they will go to heaven on the basis of a little prayer and a profession of faith in Jesus. They follow the Hyles, Hutson, Gray, Vineyard, statement of faith and never know the reality of passing from death to life. The followers of these preachers of corruption are promising lost souls liberty where there is no liberty...

http://lostinchurch.com/easy_believism_fast_track_to_hel.htm

Now, that is just the most ridiculous, unfair, and downright false statement I have ever read. Pastor Jack Hyles is unquestionably responsible for winning more souls to the Lord than any other preacher in America. Not only was Dr. Hyles a [diligent soulwinner](#), but he also trained and inspired literally thousands of people to take the Gospel into the highways and hedges of this dark and dreary sinful world. Critics like David Cloud, and the fool who made the above quote, have no idea of the damage they are doing to the cause of Jesus Christ. Sadly, they don't care, and that's the biggest problem. I challenge you to read [Pastor Jack Hyles' Favorite Soulwinning Experiences](#), and then dare tell me that he's a shallow soulwinner.

David Cloud has maliciously attacked Pastor Hyles, labeling him as "The King Of Shallow Soulwinners." Interestingly, when Jesus was crucified, some mocker also labeled our Savior as "The King Of The Jews." David Cloud ought to be ashamed of himself, and he will have to answer to God for assassinating the character of a godly man who gave his heart, mind, and soul to help others. David Cloud is not worthy to shine Pastor Jack Hyles' shoes. Only on the internet can someone who's never built a hotdog stand, attack and tear down a mighty man of God who spent his blood, sweat, and tears building a church, from a small handful of people in 1959, to over 1,000,000 members 42 years later! [Pastor Jack Hyles](#) is an American hero, and we all owe him a sincere debt of gratitude.

The author of lostinchurch.com further states...

One "Easy-Believism" preacher, Jack Hyles of the large First Baptist Church of Hammond, Indiana, says that "sin does not have to be repented of, only forgotten." I have heard these preachers use Hebrews 10:17 as a proof text. *"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more"*. I have news for them, Only God has that kind of "Forgetter". I am afraid these preachers want to hide their sins instead of forget them.

http://lostinchurch.com/easy_believism_fast_track_to_hel.htm

The person who made the above statements doesn't know what he's talking about. Here are Dr. Jack Hyles' own words concerning repentance, from his book, *Enemies Of Soulwinning*...

Over and over again the question is asked me, "Is repentance necessary for salvation?" Of course, this is of utmost importance...

There are those who say we have to repent of our sins in order to be saved. No, we have to repent only of the thing that makes us unsaved, and that is unbelief.

SOURCE: [*Enemies Of Soulwinning*](#), Chapter 4, [*Misunderstood Repentance*](#),

Dr. Hyles is 100% correct, and he certainly believes in Biblical repentance! The Gospel of John never mentions the words "repent" or "repentance" even once, yet we find the words "believe" and faith" 98 times in the Book of John. John 20:31 tells us why the Gospel of John was written... *"But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."* Clearly, to believe on Jesus Christ is to simultaneously turn one's back against sin, otherwise the word "repent" would have been mentioned repeated in the Book of John, but it wasn't mentioned even once. Acts 16:30,31 state... *"Sirs, what must I do to be saved? And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved..."* Again, there is NO mention of repentance. To believe on Christ is to repent TOWARDS God, because of one's sins (Acts 20:21)

Dr. Curtis Hutson is 100% Correct on Repentance

There is a raging battle today over the matter of Biblical "repentance" in regards to salvation. Pastor Curtis Hutson, former editor of the *Sword Of The Lord*, has it 100% correct...

Several years ago, after I finished preaching a Sunday morning service, several people trusted Christ as Saviour, including a lady and her five children. I noticed a man sitting on the same pew who did not respond. After the service, I spoke to him, while many of the members of the church were shaking hands with the lady, her children, and others who had trusted Christ that morning.

"Sir," I said, "is this your wife and children?"

"Yes," he replied.

I said, "Isn't it wonderful that they have trusted Christ as Saviour!"

"Yes," he replied.

Then I asked, "Have you trusted Christ as your Saviour?"

He dropped his head and said, "I'm afraid I haven't."

"May I ask why you haven't trusted Christ as Saviour?"

"Well," he said, "to be honest with you, I'm afraid I can't live it."

I suspected that this man had an idea that in order to be saved, he must promise God that he would never sin again, or he thought that repenting was turning from sin. So I pressed the issue. "What do you mean, you can't live it?"

"Well," he said, "I know that I will probably sin again."

I said, "Sir if getting saved is promising Jesus you will never sin again, then I would never get saved, because I know I cannot live a sinless life." I explained that to be saved one simply had to trust Jesus as Saviour. I opened the Bible

to John 3:36 and read, "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life." Then pointing to the verse, I asked, "Does the verse say 'He that believeth on the Son and lives it has everlasting life'?"

"Oh, no," he replied.

"Then what does the verse say?"

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life."

"Then must one believe on the Son and live it in order to be saved? Or must one simply believe on the Son, as the Bible says, to have everlasting life?"

"Well," he said, "I suppose that one must do what the Bible says - believe on the Son."

"Then will you trust Jesus Christ right now as your Saviour?"

With a smile on his face, he answered, "I certainly will." In a moment he joined his wife and children as the church members came by and shook hands, rejoicing with them in their decision to trust Christ as Saviour.

SOURCE: [Repentance: What Does the Bible Teach?](#)

Now in sharp contrast read [David Cloud's method](#) of dealing with the same situation.

Conclusion

Once a person is saved, then they must grow in grace by feeding on the Truth of God's Word (1st Peter 2:2). As a believer grows in the truth, he or she realizes that there are changes in their life that need to be made. It is this change of mind (repentance) that leads to a holy life sanctified unto God. Thus, it can be clearly seen that repentance unto salvation is very different from the repentance from sins. Dr. Hyles explains this subject in his excellent free online book, [Salvation Is More Than Being Saved](#). In Mark 1:4, John the Baptist speaks of "...repentance for the remission of sins," NOT repentance of sins. Acts 20:21 reads, "Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, **repentance toward God**, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ." Notice that Biblical repentance is TOWARD God. In Acts 11:21 we read, "And the hand of the Lord was with them: and **a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.**" This is Biblical repentance... turning to the Lord. To turn towards Jesus Christ in faith for salvation is to turn one's back against sin, even though the person may not be willing to forsake sin at the time of salvation.

It is unbiblical for anyone to teach that a lost sinner must forsake their sinful lifestyle to be saved. It is equally unbiblical for anyone, such as David Cloud, to teach that a person must be "ready" for the coming changes, i.e., turning from sinful living after being saved, or else they "cannot be saved." The bottom line to David Cloud's teaching on repentance is that you cannot come to Christ for salvation unless you first intend not to walk in sin after you receive Him. This is "qualification by works" as a prerequisite for receiving Christ as Savior. As evidenced with Lot and Samson in the Old Testament, not all believers live a holy life. Argue as you may, "repentance" in the Bible simply means "a

change of mind." Salvation is as simple as a person realizing their guilt as a sinner, and turning in faith to the Savior for salvation.

I am convinced that David Cloud is sincere, and granted, there's much confusion today over what repentance means, but there's no question over what a gift means. Eternal life is a "free gift" (Romans 5:15). Salvation is receiving, not giving. The change that salvation brings is a result of genuine repentance, and not a part of saving-faith. We must not confuse the FRUIT of the Holy Spirit, verses the **ROOT of faith**. The Law of God shows us our hopeless condition, and then points us to the Savior for salvation. Romans 4:5 silences all the critics...

"But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Dr. John R. Rice speaks on worldly Christians — Are they not saved?

Dr. Curtis Hutson speaks on Biblical repentance — Must a person stop sinning to be saved?

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